

VINDICATION
OF THE
Divine Authority
OF
RULING ELDERS
IN THE
Church of Christ:

ALLSAYING, THAT THE ELDERS, WHO
GOVERN THE CHURCH, ARE
NOT, IN ANY SENSE, AUTHORIZED
TO EXERCISE ANY POWER
OF BINDING OR LOOSING,

AN ANSWER TO THE
OBJECTIONS, WHICH
HAVE BEEN MADE, BY
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST, IN
THE ORDER OF THE
YEAR 1700. BY THE
REVEREND FATHER, TO THE

Reprinted by J. W. G. G. G.

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A
VINDICATION
OF THE

Divine Authority of *Ruling Elders*, &c.

In Answer to an Objection.

Object. **B**ecause it sets up a new Office
in the Church, which is a
meer humane Creature, having no authority
from the Word of GOD, nor was ever
heard of in the Church of Christ, till Calvin's
time, and that is the LAY-ELDER.

Answer. **W**E do here freely con-
fess, that we were of
opinion, as some are,
that the Ruling-El-
der hath no foundation in the Word of God,
but is a meer humane Ordinance brought into
the Church only in a prudential way.

should heartily desire the utter abolition of him: For we are not ignorant, that the Ruling Prelate was brought into the Church upon the same account, for the avoiding of Schism and Division, and afterwards proved the great Author and Fomenter of Schism and Division. And if we should decline the Ruling Prelate, and take in the Ruling Elder upon the same prudential grounds, it were just with God to make him as mischievous to the Church, as ever the Ruling Prelate was: And therefore let us consider what may be said out of the Word of God, for the Justification of this so much *decried* Officer: Yet first we cannot but take notice that the name of *Lay-Elder* was affixed to this Officer by way of reproach and scorn, by the adversaries of him, and that it ought not to be continued. For though it be evident by Scripture, [*Heb. 13. 17, 24.*] that there is a great difference betwixt the Ministry, usually called the Clergy, and the people commonly called the Laity: Yet it is also as manifest, that the Scripture distinguisheth them not by the names of Clergy and Laity: forasmuch as all Gods people are therein stiled the Lords Clergy or Inheritance, [*1 Pet. 5. 1. 36. to 36.*] and the Lord is called their Inheritance. And when persons are duly chosen from amongst the people to be Governours

vernours in the Church, as such, they are no longer Lay-men, but Ecclesiastical persons. And therefore we profess a dislike of the name Lay-Elder, and conceive they ought to be called either Governours in the Church, 1 Cor. 12. 23. or Ruling-Elders, as 1 Tim. 5. 17. not because their Office is to rule alone (for the Teaching-Elder is a Ruler also,) Heb. 13. 17. 1 Thes. 5. 12. but because their Office is only to rule. Now concerning these Ruling-Elders, we confess, that they are Officers somewhat new & strange to the Church of England; yet not new nor strange to the Word of God, nor to the Primitive Times, nor (as all know) to the Reformed Churches.

First, *They are not new nor strange to the Word of God, neither in the Old Testament, nor in the New.* The Jews in the Old Testament, had two sorts of Elders, *Elders of the Priests, and Elders of the People*; suitable to our *Teaching and Ruling Elders*, as appears, Jer. 19. 1. And these Elders of the people did sit and vote with the Priests and Levites in all their Ecclesiastical Consistories, and that by divine appointment. That they were constituent members of the great Sanhedrim, appears, 2 Chron. 19. 8. where we read, that *some of the chief of the Fathers were joyned with the Priests,*

to judge in the matters of the Lord. And how-
soever, many things among the Jews after
the Captivity, did decline to disorder and
confusion; yet we find even in the days of
Christ, and his Apostles, That the Elders of
the people still sat and voiced in the Coun-
cil with the Priests, according to the anti-
ent form, as is clear from *Matth. 26. 57, 59.*

Matth. 27. 1, 12. Matth. 16. 21.
Mat. 21. 23. Mark 14. 43. Luk. 22.
Matth. Evang. 66. and Saravia himself, who
cap. 11. p. 108. disputeth so much against Ru-
ling Elders, acknowledgeth thus much: I

find indeed, (saith he) Elders in the Assembly of
the Priests of the old Synagogue, which were not
Priests; and their suffrages and authority in all
judgments, were equal with the suffrages of the
Priests. But he adds, That these Elders of the
people, were Civil Magistrates; which is a poor
shift, directly against many Scriptures, which
contradistinguish these Elders from the Civil
Magistrate; as appears, *Acts 4. 5. Judg. 8. 14.*
Deut. 5. 23. Josh. 8. 23. 1 King. 10. 25. Ezra.
10. 14. And though it were possible, that
some of them might be Civil Magistrates, as
some Elders among us, are Justices of the
Peace; Yet they did not sit under that ca-
pacity, in the Ecclesiastical Sanhedrim, but as
Ecclesiastical Elders.

And that the Jews also had Elders of the peo-
ple.

ple, sitting and voting in their inferior Con-
sistories, appears (as we humbly conceive)
from *Acts* 13. 15. *Acts* 18. 8, 17. *Mat.* 5. 22. In
which places, we read of the Rulers of the
Synagogue, who were neither Priests nor
Levites, and yet were Rulers in Church-mat-
ters, and had power, together with the
Priests, of casting men out of the Synagogue,
and of ordering Synagogue-worship, *Joh.* 12.
42. *Acts* 13. 15.

Now this Association of the Elders of the peo-
ple, with the Priest, in the Jewish Church-Gov-
ernment, was by Divine Appointment; for Mo-
ses first instituted it, and afterwards *Jehosaphat*
restored it, according as they were directed
by God, *Numb.* 11. 16. 2 *Chron.* 19. 8. And it
did belong to the Jewish Church, not as it
was Jewish, but as it was a Church, and
therefore belongeth to the Christian Church,
as well as Jewish. For whatsoever agreeth to a
Church, as a Church; agreeth to every Church.
There was nothing Judaical or typical in
this institution, but it was founded upon the
light of nature, and right reason, which is
alike in all ages.

But leaving the Old Testament, let us
consider what may be said for the Divine
Right of the Ruling-Elder, out of the New-
Testament. For this purpose, we have al-
ready produced three places, which we shall

now briefly open; and shew how the Ruling-Elder is proved out of them. The places are, 1 Cor. 12. 28. Rom. 12. 7, 8. 1 Tim. 5. 17.

The first place is, 1 Cor. 12. 28. And God hath set some in the Church, first, Apostles; secondarily, Prophets, thirdly, Teachers; After that, Miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues; where we have an enumeration of sundry Officers of the Church; and amongst others, there are Helps, Governments. By Helps, are meant Deacons; (as not only our Reformed Divines, but Chrysostome and Estius, and others observe,) and by Governments, are meant the Ruling-Elder; which that it may the better appear, we will propound, and prove these six things.

1. That by Governments, are meant men exercising Government, the Abstract put for the Concretum. The intent of the Apostle, is not to speak of Offices distinct from Persons, but of Persons exercising Offices. This appears first, by the beginning of the verse, God hath set some in his Church; this relates to persons, not unto Offices. Secondly, by the 29. and 30. verses, where the Apostle speaks concretively, of those things which he had spoken before abstractively. Are all workers of miracles? have

all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues,
&c. ? and so by consequence, Are all helpers,
are all Governours? And therefore it is, that
the Syriack instead of *helpers*, *Governments*, reads
it *helpers*, *Governours*.

2. That the Governour here meant, must
needs be a Church-Governour; for it is expres-
ly said, that he is seated in the Church, and
therefore the Civil Magistrate cannot be
meant by this Governour, as some would
have it; partly, because this is quite besides
the whole intent and scope of the Chapter,
treating meerly upon *spiritual Church-matters*,
not at all of secular civil matters; and part-
ly, because the Magistrate, as such, is not
placed by God in the Church, but in the
Common-wealth: and partly, because the A-
postle writes of such Governours, that had
at that time actual existence in the Church;
and neither then, nor divers hundred years
after, were there any *Christian Magistrates*.

3. That this Church-Governour is seated by
God in his Church; It is a plant of Gods own
planting, and therefore shall stand firm, man-
gre all opposition. For it is expressly said,
God hath set some in his Church, first *Apostles*,
&c. then *helpers*, then *Governments*.

4. That this Church-Governour thus scat-
ed by God in his Church, is not onely a
Church-Member, but a Church-Officer. For
though

though it be a question amongst the Learned, whether some of the persons here named, as the *workers of miracles*, and those that had the *gift of healing and of tongues*, were seated by God, as Officers in the Church, and not rather, only as eminent members indued with these eminent gifts; yet it is most certain, that whosoever is seated by God in his Church, as a *Church-Governour*, must needs be a *Church-Officer*; for the nature of the gift, doth necessarily imply an Office. The Greek word for

Κυβερνήτης. Governments, is a metaphor from *Pilots*, or *Ship-Masters*, governing their Ships; (hence the Master of a Ship is called *κυβερνήτης*, a Governour, *Jam. 3. 4.*) and it notes such Officers as sit at the Stern of the Vessel of the Church, to govern and guide it in spirituals, according to the will and mind of Christ, which is the direct Office of our *Ruling-Elder*.

5. This Church-Governour thus seated by God in his Church as a *Church-Officer*, is an ordinary and perpetual Officer in his Church. Indeed, here is mention made of Officers extraordinary, as Apostles, Prophets; and of gifts extraordinary, as the gift of miracles, healing and of tongues; but here is also mention made of ordinary Officers, perpetually to abide, as *Teachers, Helpers*, and the

Church

Church-Governour, or Ruling-Elder. And that this Officer is ordinary and perpetual, appears from the perpetual necessity of him in the Church; for a Church without Government, is as a Ship without a Pilot, as a Kingdom without a Magistrate, and a world without a Sun.

6. That this Church-Governour thus seated by God in his Church, as a perpetual Officer, is an Officer *contra-distinguished* in the Text from the Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, and all other Officers in the Church. This appears,

1. By the Apostles manner of expressing these Officers in an *enumerative* form; First, *Apostles*; Secondly, *Prophets*; Thirdly, *Teachers*; After that, *Miracles*, then gifts of *healing*, &c.

2. By the recapitulation, vers. 29, 30. *Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all Teachers? Are all workers of miracles? &c.*

3. By the scope of the whole Chapter, which is to set down different gifts and offices in different subjects; It is said, vers. 8, 9. *To one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith, &c.* And for this purpose, the Apostle draweth a simile from the members of man's body: As there are different members in mans

mans body, and every member hath its different office, and every member stands in need one of another; the Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the foot, I have no need of thee, &c. So it is in the Church Ministerial, which is the Body of Christ. God hath set different Officers in his Church; some ordinary and perpetual; some extraordinary and temporary: And these different Officers, have different Offices; some to teach, others to distribute to the poor Saints, others to govern. Are all Teachers? are all Deacons? are all Church-Governours? and these have all need one of another. The Teacher cannot say to the Deacon, I have no need of thee; nor to the Church-Governour, I have no need of thee: But if all these Officers were in the Pastor alone, and only, then might he truly say to the Deacon and Ruling-Elder, I have no need of thee. But now God hath so set the Members in his Body, which is his Church, that every member stands in need one of anothers help and support.

Object. If it be objected, that the Apostles had all these offices and gifts here mentioned, eminently seated in them; for they were Prophets, Teachers, Workers of Miracles;

cles; and therefore why may not all these be understood of one and the same person?

Ans. Though it be true, that the Apostles had eminently all these; yet it is as true, that there are many here named, which had but one of these gifts formally seated in them: And it is also apparent, that some of the persons here named were distinct Officers in the Church, as the Prophet, and the Teacher. Though the Apostles were Prophets and Teachers, yet the Prophet and the Teacher were Officers distinct from the Apostles; and by a parity of Reason, so were the Governours from the Apostle, Prophet, & Teacher; the scope of the Apostle being (as hath been said) to set out distinct Offices in distinct Officers: are all Apostles? are all Prophets? are all Teachers? The sum of what we have said from this Scripture, then is this, *That God hath seated some men in his Church which have a gift and office to govern, which are neither Apostles, Prophets, Teachers, nor Pastors; and therefore they are Ruling-Elders, which is the Officer we are enquiring after.*

Now this interpretation which we have given, is not only the interpretation of Reformed Divines, both *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, but of the ancient Fathers, and even the

the Papists themselves, as appears
by the quotations in the Margent.

The second Text is, Rom. 12.6,

7, 8. Having then gifts differing according to the grace given; whether Propheste, let us prophesie according to the proportion of Faith; or Ministry,

Gerhardus de
Ministerio
Ecclesiastico
Calvin in lo-
cum, P. Mat-
t. in locum.
Beza in locum.
Piscator in
locum. Am-
bros. in locum. Chrys. in locum. Salmer. in locum, Septi-
mo loco pontis gubernatores, id est, eos qui præsunt aliis, &
gubernant, plebemque in officio continent. Et Ecclesia Christi
debet suam politiam, & cum Pastor per se omnia præstare
non posset, adjungebantur illi quo Presbyteri, de quibus dix-
it, Qui bene præsunt, Presbyteri, duplici honore dig-
ni habeantur maxime qui laborant in verbo & doctri-
na; Qui una cum Pastore deliberabant de Ecclesie cura, &
inspiratione: qui etiam fidei, atque bonæ conversationis consortes
erant.

let us wait on our ministering; or be that teacheth
on teaching; or be that exhorteth, on exhortation.
He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity. He
that ruleth, with diligence. He that sheweth mer-
cy with chearfulness. In which words, we
have a perfect enumeration of all the ordi-
nary Offices of the Church. These Offices
are reduced, first, to two general heads, Pre-
phesie and Ministry, & are therefore set down
in the Abstract. By Propheste is meant the fa-
culty of right understanding, interpreting
and expounding the Scriptures. Ministry
comprehends all other employments, in the
Church

Church. Then these generals are subdivided into the special offices contained under them, and are therefore put down in the concrete. Under Propbesie are contained, 1. He that teacheth, that is, the Doctor or Teacher, 2. He that exhorteth, i. e. the Pastor. Under Ministry are comprized, 1. He that giveth, that is the Deacon. 2. He that ruleth, that is, the Ruling-Elder. 3. He that sheweth mercy, which *Office pertained unto them, who in those days had care of the sick: So that in these words; we have the Ruling-Elder plainly set down, and contra-distinguished from the teaching and exhorting Elder (as appears by the distributive particles, *utrum* Whether he that teacheth; whether he that exhorteth; whether he that ruleth, &c.) And here likewise we have the divine institution of the Ruling Elder, for so the words hold forth. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given unto us; and thus also in the third verse, according as God hath dealt to every man, &c. This Officer is the gift of Gods free grace to the Church, for the good of it.

*Assunt in Rom.
12. Alii places
etiam hac par-
te speciale
quoddam cha-
risma sive offi-
cium signifi-
ri, & misereri
dicatur iis qui
ab Ecclesia
curandis mise-
ris, patissimum
agrotis, presen-
tis est, tisque
præbet obsequia
velut etiam
hodie fit in me-
sorum; qui
sensus haud
quaquam
improbabilis est.*

Against

Against this Exposition of the Text it is objected by those that oppose the Divine Right of the Ruling-Elder, that the Apostle speaks in these words, not of several offices in several persons, but of several Gifts in one and the same person; for he saith, having *then* Gifts differing according, &c. But we answer:

1. That the word Gift is often in Scripture taken for Office; as Eph. 4. 8. 11. *When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto men;* and v. 11. *He sheweth what these Gifts were, some to be Apostles, some Evangelists, &c.*

2. That the Apostle in the *Protasis* speaks not of several Gifts, but of several Offices, and these not in the same, but in several members, ver. 4. *As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office.* And therefore the *apodosis* must also be understood not only of several gifts, but of several Offices, and these in several subjects. And this further appears by the very similitude which the Apostle here useth, which is the same he used. 1 Cor. 12. from the body natural, wherein there are many distinct members, and every member hath its distinct Office; and so it is in the Church of Christ.

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3. These gifts here mentioned, and the waiting upon them, do necessarily imply an Office in whomsoever they are; and therefore they are set down emphatically with an Article, *ὁ δὲ διδασκαλὸς ὁ ποιῶν αὐτὸν*. He that hath the gift of teaching, and exhorting, & ruling, and waiteth upon this gift, what is he but a Teacher, Pastor, and Ruling-Elder? And this must either be granted, or else we must open a door for all members of the Church, even women, not only to preach and teach, but to rule also, and to wait upon preaching and ruling: This truth is so clear, as that the Papists themselves being convinced of it, do say upon this Text, that the Apostle here first speaks of gifts in general; and secondly, applyeth these gifts to Ecclesiastical Officers, *v. 6.* and afterwards directs his exhortation to all Christians in general.

Cornelius a Lapide, in Rom. 12. 6, 7, 8.

The third Text for the Divine Right of the Ruling-Elder, is, *1 Tim. 5. 17.* *Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine.* For the understanding of which words, we will lay down this rule, That every Text of Scripture is to be interpreted according to the literal and grammatical construction; unless it be contrary to the

analogie of Faith, or the rule of Life, or the circumstances of the Text: otherwise, we shall make a nose of wax of the Scriptures, and draw *quidlibet ex quolibet*. Now according to the Grammatical construction, here are plainly held forth two sorts of Elders; the one, *only Ruling*; and the other, *also labouring in Word and Doctrine*. Give us leave to give you the true analysis of the words.

1. Here is a Genus, a general, and that is Elders.

2. Two distinct Species, or kinds of Elders, *Those that rule well, and those that labour in Word and Doctrine*; as Pastor and Doctor.

3. Here we have two participles, expressing these two kinds of Elders, *Ruling, Labouring*; the first do only rule, the second do also labour in Word and Doctrine.

4. Here are two distinct Articles, distinctly annexed to these two participles, *οἱ ἡγούμενοι, οἱ κοινωῦντες*. They that rule, They that labour.

5. Here is an eminent *descriptive particle*, set betwixt these two kind of Elders; these two participles; these two Articles evidently distinguishing one from the other, *viz. καὶ* *especially they that labour, &c.* And wheresoever this word *καὶ* is used in the New-Testament, it is used to distinguish thing from thing, or person from person; as Gal. 6. 10.

Phil. 4. 22. 1 Tim. 5. 8. 1 Tim. 4. 10. Tit. 1. 10.
2 Tim. 4. 13. 2 Pet. 2. 20. Acts 26. 38. In all
which places, the word [*especially*] is used as
a discrete particle, to distinguish one thing
from another, or one person from another,
and therefore being applyed here to persons,
must necessarily distinguish person from per-
son, Officer from Officer. It

is absurd to say, (saith Dr. *Whitaker*,) that this Text is to be
understood of one & the same
Elder. If a man should say,
All the Students in the Univer-
sity are worthy of double honour,
especially, They that are Professors
of Divinity; He must necessarily
understand it of two sorts of Stu-

Whitaker in pro-
lationibus suis,
ut refert in refu-
tatione Downhami
Shetlandius, cit-
ted by the Au-
thor of Alcas
Damascen. cap.
12. page 925,
926

dents. Or if a man should say, *All Gentlemen*
that do Service for the Kingdom in their Counties,
are worthy of double honour, especially they that do
Service in the Parliament; this must needs be un-
derstood of different persons. We are not igno-
rant, that Archbishop *Whitgift*, Bishop *King*,
Bishop *Bilson*, Bishop *Downham*, and others,
labour to fasten divers other interpretations
upon these words, which would be over-re-
dious here to rehearse. Only thus much we
crave leave to say, which we desire may be
seriously weighed; That all other senses that
are given of these words, are either such as

are disagreeing from the literal and Gram-
 matical construction, or such as fall into one
 of these two absurdities, either to maintain
 a *non-preaching Ministry*, or a *lazy-preaching Mi-
 nistry* to deserve double honour.

* Whitgift a-
 gainst Carth-
 wright.

* In a Sermon
 of his in print

* *De perpetua
 Eccl. gubernat.*

Archbishop *Whitgift* by the El-
 der that rules well, understands
 a Reader that is not a Preacher.
 * *Dr. King*, a Bishop ruling, and
 not preaching, which is to say,
 that a non-preaching Minister
 deserves double honour. * *Dr.*

Bilson saith, that the words are to be under-
 stood of two sorts of Elders, and that the
 meaning is, That the Elder that rules well,
 and preacheth, is worthy of double honour,
 especially they that labour, that is, *that preach
 abundantly*, that do *κωλύειν*, labour as a Water-
 man at his Oar, which is as much as if he
 had said, that a *lazy Minister*, or a *seldom-prea-
 ching Minister*, deserves double honour. For all
 Preachers are in Scripture required *κωλύειν*, to
 labour abundantly, 1 *Thes.* 5. 11. 1 *Cor.* 3. 8. where
 the same word is used that is here expressed.
 If the Apostle had meant to have distinguish-
 ed them by their extraordinary labour, he
 would rather have said, *κωλύειν*, then *κωλύειν*,
 for other-where he useth *κωλύειν*, as a degree
 of painful labour, [2 *Cor.* 11. 27. 1 *Thes.* 2. 9.]
 above *κωλύειν*, which is put for common la-
 bour,

bour, Rom. 16. 12. Dr Downname and others, interpret the words of one and the same Elder thus, The Elders that rule well, are worthy of double honour, especially they that labour; that is, (say they) *especially they labouring, or especially because they labour.* And so they make their labouring, to be the chief cause of their double honour. But this interpretation is against the literal meaning, for the Greek is not *οι κειρωσιν*, if they labour, but *οι κειρωσιν*, especially they that labour. Here is a participle with an Article, and a *discretive particle*, which can never be rightly and literally translated *causatively*.

And therefore we conclude, together with our Reformed Divines, that this Text according to the proper and Grammatical construction of it, doth hold forth unto all unprejudiced Christians, a Ruling-Elder, distinct from a Teaching-Elder, which is the thing we undertook to prove.

Beza in

1 Tim. 3. 17.

Piscator in
locum.

Calvin loc.

*An Article, Agreed upon by the ELDERS
and MESSENGERS of the Churches,
Assembled in the SYNOD, at Boston
in New-England, Sept. 10th. 1679.*

In Page 10, II.

It is requisite that utmost endeavours should be used, in order to a full supply of Officers in the Churches, according to Christs Institution. The defect of these Churches on this account is very lamentable, there being in most of the Churches only one Teaching Officer, for the burden of the whole Congregation to lye upon. The Lord Christ would not have instituted Pastors, Teachers, Ruling Elders (nor the Apostles have ordained Elders in every Church, *Act. 14. 23. Tit. 1. 5.*) if he had not seen there was need of them for the good of his People ; and therefore for men to think they can do well enough without them, is both to break the second Commandment, and to reflect upon the wisdom of Christ, as if he did appoint unnecessary

necessary Officers in his Church. Experience hath evinced, that Personal Instruction and Discipline, hath been a happy means to Reform degenerated Congregations; yea, and owned by the Lord for the Conversion of many Souls: but where there are Great Congregations, it is impossible for one man, besides his labours in Publick, fully to attend these other things of great importance; and necessary to be done in order to an effectual Reformation of Families and Congregations.

B 4

QUEST.

QUESTION.

Whether are not the Brethren, and not the Elders of the Church only, to Judge concerning the Qualifications and Fitness, of those who are Admitted into their Communion?

* ANSWER.

There is some difference of Apprehension, and yet no breach of Amity or Union, as to this *Question* between the Brethren of the Presbyterian, and the Congregational way, the former giving this power only to the *Eldership*, the latter joyning the *Fraternity* with them. * Mr. Cotton, and from him Mr. Norton has Judiciously stated and discussed this Controversy. Let their and some other Arguments be duely weighed in the Ballance of the Sanctuary.

1. They that have power in Admission have power to Judge whether the Persons to be Admitted are duely qualified for Admission. But this is true of the *Fraternity* as well as of the *Presbytery*. No one can be Admitted into the Church by the Elders without the Consent of the Brethren. The Community is concerned in who are Admitted, and therefore should concur therein. Its a received maxim,

maxim, *Quod tangit omnes, debet ab omnibus approbari.* And reason says, They that have power to Admit, have power to Judge whether the Persons who desire it, are fit for that Admittance.

2. They that have power to Judge whether a Person is fit to be cast out of Communion, have power to Judge whether he is fit to be received into Communion. *The Key* [the power] of *Opening and Shutting* belongs to the same Persons. But it is clear from the Scripture, that the Brethren and not the Elders only have power to Judge whether an Offender is fit to be Excommunicated, *Matt. 18. 17. 1 Cor. 5. 12.* All Orthodox Divines agree that Church Discipline should be Exercised, *Consentiente plebe.* So amongst the Ancients, *Cyprian, Ambrose, Austin, Jerom, Chrysostom, Nazianzene, Theodoret, Theophylact,* And amongst our Modren Divines, *Calvin, Beza, Bullinger, Melancton, Junius, Pareus, Rivet, Trelcatius.* If their consent is necessary, than they have power to Judge whether they ought to consent or no.

3. They that have power to Judge whether a Person Excommunicated, is fit to be restored to the Communion of the Church, have power to Judge whether Persons yet received into the Communion of the Church are duely qualified for that Communion.

person. But the Apostle writes to the Brethren, as well as to the Elders, of the Church in Corinth, to restore a Penitent, whom they had according to the Discipline of Christ laid under a Church censure, 2 Cor. 2. 6. If the Brethren are competent Judges concerning the Repentance of a Lapsed Communicant, they are not incompetent Judges of the Repentance of other Persons that may offer themselves to their Communion.

4. When Saul desired to joyn to the Church at Jerusalem, he was not admitted until the Brethren were by the Testimony of Barnabas, together with his own Declaration, satisfied concerning the reality of his Faith and Repentance, *Act.* 9. 26, 27.

5. If only Elders have power to Judge who are fit to come to the Sacrament or to joyn to the Churches, then in case there is but one Elder in a Church (as there are very few Churches in New-England that have more Elders than one) the Sole power will reside in that one mans hands. Then by a parity of reason one alone would have power to suspend from Communion, which Judicious Presbyterians do not allow of. For the London Ministers in their Vindication of the Presbyterian Government, (p. 70, 71.) have these words. ' It is (say they) as warrantable by the Word of God, for one Minister to assume
' unto

unto himself alone the power of Suspending from the Sacrament, as it is to assume the whole power of admitting to the Sacrament, for *contrariorum eadem est ratio*. For one Minister alone to assume this power to himself, is to make himself a Congregational Pope. It is a bringing into the Church a power that would have some resemblance to Auricular Confession. That said the Presbyterians Fifty years ago.

6. The way to keep Popery out of the World, is for the *Fraternity* in Churches to assert and maintain that power and privilege, which does of right belong unto them. Certain it is, that in the first Ages of Christianity this power which we plead for, was not taken out of the hands of the Brotherhood. One of the Ancients, whose writings give us the greatest insight, into what was the general practice of the Churches, in the *Third Century*, makes this past dispute. In * one of his Epistles, he has these words, *Examinabuntur Singula Præsentibus et judicantibus vobis.* And in another, *Vix plebi persuadco et tales patientur admitti.* That he had much ado to persuade the People to be satisfied with the Repentance and Qualifications of some who desired a Reception or Restoration to Communion. When in after times Cyprian.

* Cyprian.
Epist. 40.

Members thought with themselves, our Ministers understand Church Affairs better than we do, therefore we will unconcern ourselves, and leave all to their *Conscience* and *Prudence* : this very thing (as some Learned men have observed) was that which made way for the rise of Popery. It may be it will be for the Edification of some Readers, if we recite some passages out of our famous Dr. Owen. In his Judicious * Treatise of Evangelical Churches. He has these

* Part 1. Page 295, 296. Words. ' Dr. *Stillington* denies
' unto the People all Liberty or
' Ability to chuse their own
' Pastors, to judge what is meet for their
' own Edification, what is Heresy, or a pernicious Error, and what is not, or any thing
' of the like nature. This is almost the same
' with that of the Pharisees, concerning them
' who admired and followed the Doctrine of
' our Saviour, *Joh. 7. 49. This People which know*
' *not the Law* : yet was it *this People*, whom
' the Apostle directed to choose out from among themselves, Persons meet for an Evangelical Office, *Act. 6. The same People*
' who joyned with the Apostles and Elders in
' consideration of the Grand Case concerning the continuation of the Legal Ceremonies, and were Associates with them
' in the determination of it, *Act. 15. The same*

' *same* to whom all the Apostolical Epistles;
 ' Excepting some to particular persons, were
 ' written. And unto whom such directions
 ' were given and duties Enjoyned in them,
 ' as suppose not only Liberty and Ability to
 ' judge for themselves in all matters of Faith
 ' and Obedience, but also an especial Inte-
 ' rest in the Order and Discipline of the
 ' Church, those who were to say to Arch-
 ' *pus* their Bishop, *take heed to the Ministry*
 ' *which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou*
 ' *fulfil it,* Col. 4. 17. Unto whom of all sorts
 ' it is Commanded that they should Examine
 ' and Try Antichrists, Spirits, and false Teachers,
 ' that is all sorts of Hereticks, Heresies, and
 ' Errors, 1 *Job. chap. 2, 3* &c. That people
 ' who even in following Ages adhered unto
 ' the Faith and the Orthodox profession of
 ' it, when almost all the Bishops were be-
 ' came Arian Hereticks. This principle of
 ' the Reformation in Vindication of the
 ' Rights, Liberties, & Priviledges of the Chri-
 ' stian People to judge and choose for them-
 ' selves in matters of Religion, to joyn free-
 ' ly in those Church-Duties which are re-
 ' quired of them, without which the work of
 ' it had never been carryed on, we do abide
 ' by, and maintain. Yea, we meet with
 ' Opposition more fierce, than upon the
 ' count of our asserting the Liberty

' Rights of the People, in reference unto
 ' Church Order and Worship. But I shall
 ' not be afraid to say, that as the Reforma-
 ' tion was begun and carried on, on this
 ' principle : So when, *this People* shall thro' an
 ' apprehension of their Ignorance, Weakness,
 ' and *Unwisdom* to judge in matters of Reli-
 ' gion, for themselves, and their own duty,
 ' be kept and deterred from it ; or when
 ' through their own sloth, negligence and
 ' viciousness they shall be really incapable
 ' to manage their own Interest in Church
 ' Affairs, as being fit only to be Governed
 ' if not as *Brut* Creatures, yet as *Mute* Per-
 ' sons, and that these things are improved
 ' by the Ambition of the *Clergy*, *ingrossing* all
 ' things in the Church to themselves, as they did
 ' in former Ages, if the old *Pope* dome do not
 ' return, a *New One* will be Erected as bad
 ' as the other. Thus far Dr. Owen.

THE END.

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